

COURT MOURNING.

THE NIGHTMARE OF OLD-WORLD COURT LIFE.

PERPLEXING AND COSTLY OBLIGATIONS IMPOSED ON ALL EUROPE BY THE DEATH OF PRINCES AND THEIR RELATIVES.

It is difficult to convey an idea to the people in this country of the anxiety which prevails, not only in England itself, but also in every quarter of the vast dominions of Queen Victoria, concerning her own health, as well as that of every member of her very large family. It is not so much on the ground of loyalty that this anxiety exists just now, although it cannot be denied that the reigning dynasty of Great Britain, and Her Majesty in particular, enjoy probably to a greater degree than any other sovereign house the regard and affection of their fellow-countrymen. But it is the dread lest any untoward event should occur to render useless the extensive and costly preparations which have been made to celebrate in an appropriate manner the sixtieth anniversary of the Queen's accession to the throne. All these preparations will have been useless, all the money already spent will be lost beyond redemption, and all hopes and projects disappointed in the event of any death taking place within the next four weeks that would entail court mourning.

THE DREAD OF ROYAL DEATHS.

Court mourning may be described as the nightmare of European court life, as well as of that portion of the official world and of society which is more or less intimately connected with the court. No entertainment can ever be organized, no festivity planned, without the everlasting dread of some royal death taking place to render necessary a postponement or an abandonment of the entire affair. Annoying for the men, it is still more so for the women, since they never know until the last minute whether they can wear colors or whether they are condemned to garments of sable hue. For even when the relationship of the dead prince or princess of the blood is so remote as to render unnecessary the postponement of social and official functions and entertainments, court mourning is, nevertheless, necessary for a period ranging all the way from ten days to three months, during which time every woman with pretensions to social standing is expected to array herself in black and to relegate her diamonds, her rubies, her sapphires and her emeralds and her turquoises to her casket, and to wear nothing in the shape of jewelry but pearls, which are the symbol of tears, while the men are expected to add a mourning band to their hat, to restrict themselves to black ties for day wear, and, if entitled to wear a uniform, to adorn the sleeves thereof with an armband of crape.

Royal personages and court officials are great sticklers about such matters as these, and while any lady who ventures during a period of court mourning to attend a drawing-room or court function in colored attire exposes herself to an ungracious reception on the part of the royal personages present, there have even been numerous occasions where women have actually been prevented by the officials of the Lord Chamberlain's department from entering the presence of royalty at all, in consequence of their being dressed otherwise than in the prescribed black toilettes.

Just at the present moment all the courts of Europe are in mourning for the deaths of the Duchess of Alençon in the great fire at Paris and of her uncle, the old Duke d'Aumale, at Zucco, his place in Sicily. True, the mourning is only for a fortnight, but royal relationships nowadays are so extensive that, what with one thing and another, two-thirds of the year may be said to be spent in court mourning. Under the circumstances the reigning families of Europe are naturally reluctant to saddle themselves with additional burdens in this respect, and it is to this consideration in part that must be ascribed their failure, with one notable exception, to decree court mourning for the Empress Mother of Japan, a neglect which has given no end of offence to the Mikado. There was but one sovereign in Europe who went to the length of putting his court into mourning during the space of a fortnight for this great lady of the Orient, and that was King Leopold of Belgium, who was prompted thereto by motives which must be described as of an economic character, rather than by reasons of sympathy and sorrow. For he is largely interested in the fortnightly line of steamships between Antwerp and Yokohama, which has recently been opened, and which is heavily subventioned by the Japanese Government, while he is doing his utmost to promote the trade and commerce between his kingdom and the Land of the Rising Sun, where he hopes to find a new and profitable market for Belgian manufactures.

THE MIKADO OUTSIDE THE PALE.

But the other courts of Europe, although officially apprised by the Japanese Envoys of the death of their Dowager Empress, failed to take any action in the matter, thereby once more reminding the Mikado that, in spite of his having transformed his title from the Oriental style of "Tenno" to the European dignity of "Emperor," and of having organized his Government and a portion of his Court on an altogether European basis, he is not yet regarded as forming part and parcel of the concert of Old World royalty, to which even the young King of Serbia, great-grandson of a mere swineherd, belongs, and that he has failed as yet to find admission

to Part I of the "Almanach de Gotha"—that Part I which is restricted to the so-called sovereign houses, and not alone of Christendom, since even the Sultan of Turkey figures therein. As far as the courts of Europe are concerned Emperor Mutsu-Hito continues to be classed with the King of Siam, the Shah of Persia and the negro potentates of Africa, and as little attention is paid by the reigning houses of Europe and by their officials to the solemn notification that "Her Majesty the Empress Dowager of Japan has breathed her last after being duly administered with the Holy Sacraments of the Shinto Faith," as would be conceded to the equally exotic announcement that the King of Dahomey, of Loango or of some other African race had been cremated, along with his wives, his slaves and his cattle, in strict accordance with the fetich rites of that particular district

the slightest drop of rain or snow has the effect of taking the dye out of the crape and damaging the embroidery beyond repair. Many of these uniforms cost as much as \$800, and ordinarily the pay attached to the offices of those entitled to wear them is not so big as to admit of their spoiling many such uniforms.

Until a few years ago it was the rule at the courts of Europe that no mourning should be donned by royalty, or should be officially decreed for wear at court, save in the cases of the deaths of full-fledged princes and princesses of the blood. It did not matter if a sovereign or a royal personage had some morganatic relation, either in the shape of a wife or of a child, or some dear and intimate friend of merely noble or plebeian rank, whose death constituted nothing less than a bereavement and an irreparable loss. They were not supposed to assume mourn-

the utmost skill on the part of the physicians and embalmers to conceal from the public the traces of the injuries which he had sustained. The reluctance of the reigning families to omit this species of post-mortem reception is because its absence invariably gives rise to the most extraordinary rumors and reports, the late King John of Saxony and Czar Alexander I of Russia having been asserted to have survived their official obsequies for many years, owing to their not having lain in state. EX-ATTACHE.

ENGLISH NURSES IN GREECE.

THE AMERICAN W. C. T. U. HELPED MAINTAIN THEM—THEIR TRYING EXPERIENCE.

During the latter part of the campaign in Greece excellent service was done in the field hospitals by a few English nurses, who left home to care for the wounded soldiers in the Greek Army. The Princess of Wales was much interested in the project, and lent her influence to aid it, and Lady Henry Somerset took an active part in the arrangements for the nurses' departure.

This country also had its part in the affair, for the National W. C. T. U. sent, through Miss Frances Willard, \$1,500, representing the expenses of sending one nurse. The women, who were all enthusiastic for the Greek cause, and experienced in hospital work, sailed from London and arrived a few weeks ago at Athens. They were heartily welcomed there, and the people who had assembled to greet them cheered them warmly as they landed. The work which was assigned to them was taxing to their strength, and frequently of the most trying and disagreeable nature, but they had come with the knowledge that war meant hardships, and they have acquitted themselves nobly. The task of caring for the wounded is not ended yet, and the nurses will doubtless stay as long as their presence can be of use.

KILLING GERMS IN BOOKS.

DR. BILLINGS'S DISCOVERY OF AN EFFECTIVE DISINFECTANT.

Charles Lamb, in one of the quaintest and most charming of his essays, declares that he prefers some books when they are soiled and dog-eared; that a copy of Fielding or Richardson pleases him better when it bears evidences of having been read and re-read—maybe by some lonely seamstress in her garret—than in all the immaculate whiteness and cleanliness of a new edition.

The sentiment is a pretty one, and other writers, notably the present Poet Laureate, have confessed to sharing it with Elia. But it must be a good deal harder nowadays to feel it than it was in the days of Lamb. Science has made tremendous strides since then, and with each stride has crushed some sentiment or belief dear to our ancestors. Science takes the well-thumbed volume, forgets all the pathos in it and finds instead germs. And most people would confess that sentiment comes a little dear when it carries typhoid or diphtheria along with it.

Such, at any rate, is the opinion of the authorities of the New-York Public Library. When the reservoir is removed from Bryant Park, and in its place is a splendid library, there will be a free lending department, as well as the reading-rooms and reference library. Every inhabitant of New-York of good character will be able to borrow books free of charge, and the Public Library authorities have been for some time considering how the dangers inevitably resulting from circulating volumes in every part of the city may be avoided. Preventive measures are naturally out of the question. It would be as impossible to discover whether every volume lent would be used by persons free from diseases, as to prophesy where such diseases were about to break out. The measures taken must be corrective, and the question resolved itself into an inquiry as to whether a satisfactory disinfectant could be found.

For some time Dr. John S. Billings, director of the library, has been experimenting in order to discover a perfect disinfectant. Last year Mr. Horton, under Dr. Billings's direction, conducted a series of experiments in the latter's laboratory in Philadelphia. A number of old Patent Office reports were inoculated with a choice assortment of bacteria, and in a short time the books were full of germs of measles, scarlet fever, small-pox and other diseases.

Trials were then made of various germ-destroying substances, and as a result of the experiments Dr. Billings says that he has a perfect disinfectant in the gas formaldehyde. The volume is placed in a glass or metal box with a saucerful of a solution of formalin in water, and left for an hour or two. At the end of that time the vapor has penetrated into every particle of the book and not a live germ can be found.

The process will be used in the circulating department of the New-York Public Library, and the patrons of the institution may ease their minds of any fear that the volumes they borrow may bring the dreaded germs of diphtheria or typhoid fever into their houses.

Bibliophiles, too, will be glad to know that the formalin will destroy the Croton bug, responsible for the ruin of so many fine bindings in this country. The traditional book worm is now a rarity in America, but the Croton bug has taken its place, and the collector of Le Gascons or Grelers has in Dr. Billings's discovery a preventive of the ravages that the insect's parison for morocco and calfskin causes.



ARRIVAL AT PATRAS OF THE NURSES SENT OUT TO THE CROWN PRINCESS OF GREECE UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF THE PRINCESS OF WALES.
(From a sketch by an "Illustrated London News" artist.)

of the Dark Continent to which he had belonged.

Besides these there are other considerations which doubtless prompt the courts of Europe to neglect those official courtesies to the Mikado in the shape of mourning that are nowadays accorded even in the case of the deaths of the morganatic connections of royalty. The Emperor of Japan, although he expects to be treated on the same footing as his brother sovereigns in Europe, continues to maintain an establishment of several hundred deputy wives, whose offspring are considered as legitimate as if they had been the issue of his really clever but unfortunately childless Empress.

Now, supposing that the reigning houses of Europe were to start decreeing official mourning for every death that took place in the patriarchal family of the Mikado, they might just as well wear black all the year round and abandon every form of festivity. For with so many hundred deputy wives, the majority of whom have children—children who have claims to consideration as the legitimate offspring of the Emperor; that is to say, as princes and princesses of the blood—there is necessarily some death or other taking place on an average each month of the year in the family of His Japanese Majesty. Moreover, how is it possible to expect such courts as those of Vienna, of St. Petersburg and of St. James to treat on a footing of equality a court one of the principal dignitaries of which bears the peculiar title of "Gentleman of the Imperial Chamber of Musk Cats"?

THE ONEROUS RULES IN RUSSIA.

At the present time there is no court in Europe where the rules for mourning are so onerous as in that of Russia. When either an Emperor or Empress dies there, all Muscovite officials and dignitaries above a certain rank are compelled not only to array themselves and their families in habiliments of woe, but also to dress their servants in deep mourning, to have their carriages upholstered in black, and to have the coats-of-arms, crests and monograms removed from the panels of their equipages, while one of the salons of their residences must be draped completely in black cloth, with the furniture upholstered in black. Moreover, all the gold and silver embroideries on the uniform of the officers and officials has to be carefully covered with crape. This is a terrible expense, since the

ing in such instances as these, no matter how heartbroken they might be. Queen Victoria, however, may be said to have established a new era in this particular. For she took the unprecedented step of decreeing official mourning for Princess Julia of Battenberg, the plebeian-born and morganatic wife, or rather widow, of Prince Alexander of Hesse, a lady who on the Continent was not even considered as "hoffaehig," that is to say, qualified for presentation at court.

Queen Victoria's action gave rise to no end of discussion, for in decreeing court mourning for the Princess Battenberg she practically compelled all the foreign Ambassadors and Envoys accredited to her court, to pay the same tribute of respect to the dead lady, and there were many of the Continental sovereigns, notably Emperor William of Germany, King Christian of Denmark and Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria, who did not at all relish the idea of their Ambassadors putting themselves into mourning for so insignificant a person as the morganatic widow of a mere "serene highness" such as Prince Alexander of Hesse. Indeed, a vast deal of very acrimonious diplomatic correspondence ensued in consequence thereof, between the foreign offices of Vienna, Berlin and Copenhagen and that of Great Britain.

A GRIM COMEDY.

In conclusion it may be said that there is one point of analogy between the courts of the Orient and those of the civilized Occident in connection with the death of royal personages. It is the sort of grim comedy which provides that a royal personage shall be regarded as alive until the actual celebration of the funeral. So far as Europe is concerned it is an etiquette which belongs to a bygone age, and which should find no place in the present enlightened era, since it savors of something akin to mockery and cannot but be most painful to those near and dear relatives who have been bereaved. Thus, just before the funeral, the royal corpse holds a sort of levee or reception, when all the great dignitaries of the realm and members of the Court pass, one by one, before the august dead, bowing low and kissing the cold and clammy hand of the body. It is a ceremony that was not even omitted in the case of poor Crown Prince Rudolph of Austria, although the crushing in of the top of his skull and of the left side of his head by those who took part in the terrible tragedy at Meyerling made necessary the use of